

9 Tips for Running a Government Fleet

TO BEST SERVE CITIZEN NEEDS



Samsara + City of Fort Lauderdale





Introduction

From sanitation to police to public works, every vehicle in a public sector fleet serves a unique purpose to support the community.

But such a noble mission comes with many challenges: a variety of internal and external stakeholders, a diversity of assets that shift projects and locations every day, and a reputation to uphold in every interaction. With an emphasis on maximizing taxpayer dollars as part of every decision, managing a government fleet can be a balancing act of choosing where to put your time, energy, and money. In fact, 56% of respondents from a 2018 *Government Fleet* survey reported needing to increase their operating budget last year due to rising fuel, oil, and technology costs.¹

To best manage these needs and increase day-to-day efficiency, top-performing public sector fleets are defining new processes and embracing innovative technology — including telematics, which about 75% of survey respondents now report having installed on at least some of their vehicles.²

In this guide, learn how to maximize your fleet's impact with proven best practices from the City of Fort Lauderdale, winner of the 2019 Samsara Top Fleet Award for Above & Beyond Service.

¹. [Government Fleet, 2018 Benchmarking Statistics](#)

². [Government Fleet, 2018 Benchmarking Statistics](#)

With more than 1,700 vehicles in their fleet across multiple city departments, the City of Fort Lauderdale is focused on one thing: providing quality services for its citizens.

“As an international vacation destination with 180,000 residents and over 13 million visitors per year, we put a big emphasis on citizen service,” said Dr. Nancy Gassman, Assistant Public Works Director for Sustainability at the City of Fort Lauderdale. “We want everyone who passes through Fort Lauderdale to have a positive experience.”

The city’s Fleet Services works closely with 9 other departments to support city services for residents and visitors, including public works, parks and recreation, police, and fire rescue. From street sweeping to emergency response, each of its vehicles is responsible for keeping the community safe, clean, and enjoyable for all. Meanwhile, the fleet team is always looking for ways to innovate, most recently through updating preventative maintenance processes, facilitating stakeholder dialogues, and adding electric vehicles to its fleet.

In 2019, the City of Fort Lauderdale was awarded the Samsara Top Fleet Award for Above & Beyond Service for managing — and continuously improving — a reliable, efficient, and citizen-focused city fleet. The tips in this guide come directly from the experienced leaders running its fleet department.



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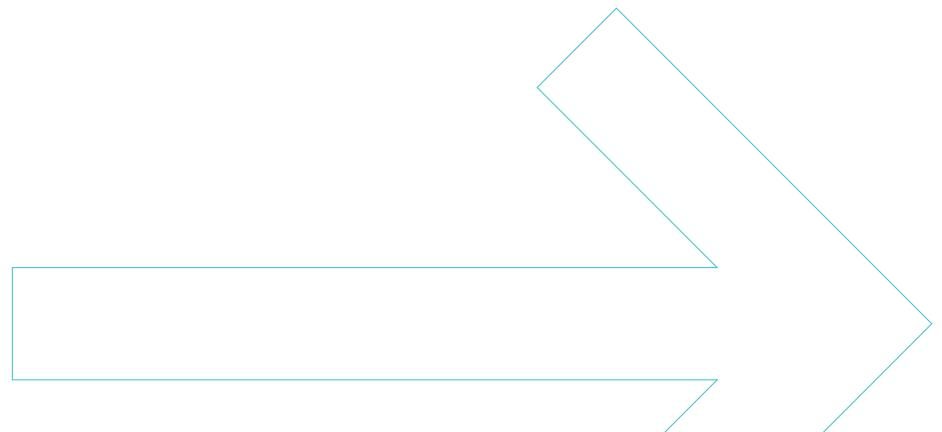
01

Right-Size Your Fleet

“Part of our job is to educate our drivers on different vehicle options so that we can be efficient and cost-effective. It benefits the city and everyone to get better fuel economy.”

DREW NEWSTROM

Automotive & Equipment Engineer



WITHOUT THOUGHTFUL RESOURCE PLANNING, cities can easily find themselves with vehicles that are highly specialized and rarely used or even unsuitable for their changing needs. To get the most holistic view of your fleet, your right-sizing strategy should focus on three key areas: vehicle type, utilization, and job type.

As a fleet manager, it's a part of the job to educate your staff and drivers about all vehicle options in order to prevent unnecessary wear and tear and maximize the efficiency of your entire fleet. That's why Drew Newstrom, Automotive and Equipment Engineer, and Sandy Leonard, Fleet Services Program Manager for the City of Fort Lauderdale, pay close attention to what vehicles their staff are using. For example, Newstrom and Leonard often find that drivers are using bigger vehicles than they need for small jobs, which can be inefficient. Or, in a reverse instance, Newstrom found that a driver was using a half-ton truck to tow a heavy trailer, which can cause premature failures and add downtime to the truck.

Fleet right-sizing is a management practice that can help vehicle fleet managers build and maintain sustainable, fuel-efficient fleets. By evaluating fleet size and composition, fleet managers can optimize vehicle use, conserve fuel, reduce emissions, and save money on fuel and maintenance.



QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU RIGHT-SIZE

- ☐ What do you use the vehicle for?
- ☐ How many people travel in the cab of the vehicle at one time?
- ☐ Do you plan on towing with this vehicle?
- ☐ How much equipment/gear do you typically have in the truck/truck bed?
- ☐ Does the vehicle go off road?
- ☐ What is the length of the vehicle?
- ☐ What is the roof height?
- ☐ What is the fuel consumption of each vehicle?
- ☐ What is the age of each vehicle?

If drivers are aware of all of their vehicle options ahead of time, trips can be planned and executed more efficiently—which saves the city time and money. Start by asking your drivers what vehicles they’re currently using and determine if the vehicle size is appropriate for their given job. If not, make sure your drivers swap out the vehicle for a more appropriately-sized vehicle.

Of course, this is easier said than done — but Leonard has created a system that has proven highly effective: a vehicle selector list that includes all of the city’s vehicles and their different purposes.

“The vehicle selector list helps us select the right type of vehicle for each of our different applications,” said Leonard. “This way, we can be sure we’re using our resources in the most effective way.”

Tracking utilization is also key to maintaining an efficient fleet. Using Samsara's AG45 asset trackers combined with automated utilization reports, Leonard and Newstrom are able to find vehicles that aren't being used and redistribute them to other departments.



PRO TIP

Use asset trackers for your fleet to help identify and reallocate unused assets and vehicles. Samsara offers real-time reports showing a percentage calculation of usage for assets during any time window you specify. Tagging makes it easy to compare utilization by asset type, geography, or business unit.

[Learn more at samsara.com](https://samsara.com)



02

Optimize Your Vehicle Replacement Strategy

“If you stick to your replacement strategy of 7-10 years, the ROI data will speak for itself.”

SANDY LEONARD

Program Manager, Fleet Services



VEHICLE REPLACEMENT IS BOTH AN ART AND A SCIENCE,

says Drew Newstrom, Automotive and Equipment Engineer for the City of Fort Lauderdale. “Knowing when to buy, when to sell, and where to sell are the most important parts of your replacement strategy,” he said. The challenge is balancing the three main considerations for replacing a vehicle: the age of the vehicle, the current engine performance, and the projected resale price.

Naturally, the longer vehicles are in use, the more maintenance repairs they typically require. This can often lead to unexpected downtime and costs that impact a fleet’s bottom line. In addition, engine performance and fuel economy deteriorate over the lifespan of a vehicle, leading to higher fuel costs for your fleet.

In fact, according to a study performed by *Popular Mechanic*, the first 25,000 miles of vehicle use cost an average of \$1,400 in maintenance. Maintenance costs continue to rise over your vehicle’s lifetime, and once you reach 100,000 miles, the last 25,000 miles cost an average of \$3,900 in maintenance — nearly 3 times more.⁴

To minimize expenses and maximize resale value, it’s crucial to keep your replacements on a consistent schedule. The City of Fort Lauderdale aims for a replacement schedule of every 7-10 years, depending on the vehicle.

⁴. [Popular Mechanic](#)



7–10_{YEARS}

is the replacement schedule the City of Fort Lauderdale recommends.

Of course, city budgets always change, which can make it tempting to delay a replacement — but creating a designated fund can help. In fact, 76% of government fleet managers now report having an equipment replacement program and/or fund.⁵ Newstrom also insists that following your plan will ultimately save your city money and keep your fleet safer.

“It’s important to stick to the plan as best you can,” Newstrom said. “Ultimately, it will save you money on maintenance costs down the line.”

When it comes time to sell, Newstrom advises partnering with wholesalers or selling at auctions, which can help speed the selling process and keep your replacement plan on track.

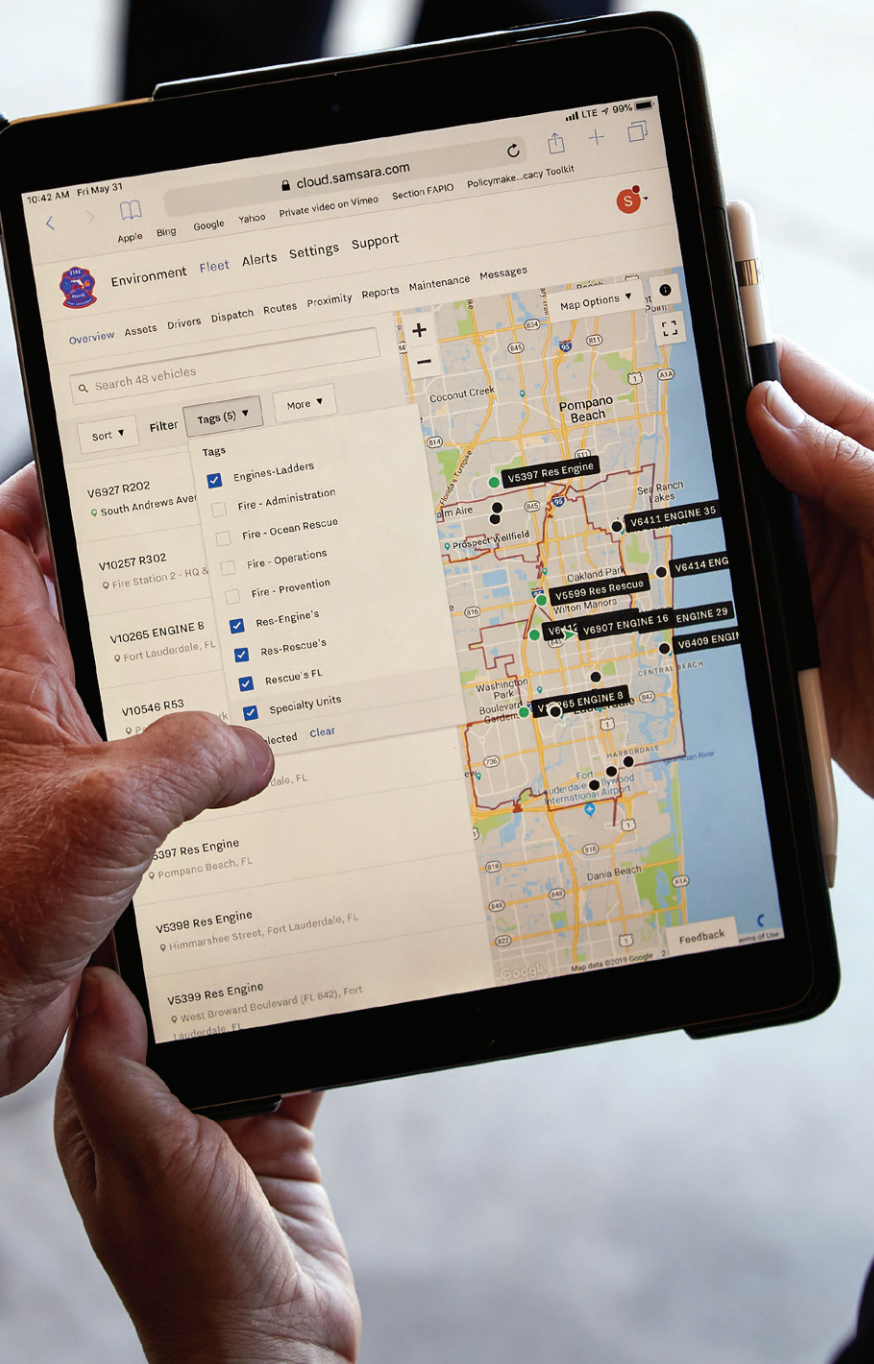
PRO TIP

To gauge vehicle reliability as part of your replacement strategy, you can use a telematics solution like Samsara to track battery performance and capture vehicle diagnostics.

Learn more at samsara.com

5. [Government Fleet, 2018 Benchmarking Statistics](#)





03

Improve Dispatch Efficiency with Real-Time GPS

“GPS allows us to be less reliant on phone calls and more confident in the location of our city’s emergency vehicles.”

SANDY LEONARD

Program Manager, Fleet Services



WITHOUT REAL-TIME VISIBILITY INTO WHERE YOUR

VEHICLES ARE, the dispatching process can be inefficient — dispatchers often have to call around to see who's available to dispatch to a job, which wastes valuable time.

The simplest way to decrease dispatch time is to implement a telematics system across all of your vehicles. Telematics solutions can show the location of every vehicle, helping dispatchers determine the nearest vehicle to send to a particular site and reduce the amount of time it takes for a vehicle to arrive.

In fact, more and more government fleets are embracing telematics. 77% of respondents from a 2018 *Government Fleet* survey reported having telematics installed on at least some of their vehicles.

From emergency response situations to citizen requests for water meter services, City of Fort Lauderdale's fleet relies on Samsara's real-time GPS to improve response times and quality of service for their citizens.

“Previously, we would have to make a few phone calls, find out where different people were, and then dispatch the driver,” said Dr. Nancy Gassman, Assistant Public Works Director for Sustainability. “Now, we have a much more efficient way of doing that.”

77%

of public fleets report having telematics installed on at least some of their vehicles.⁶

[6. Government Fleet, 2018 Benchmarking Statistics](#)

PRO TIP

Invest in real-time fleet telematics to provide your dispatchers with more reliable live location information. Make sure your fleet management system integrates with your dispatch software to create a more seamless experience for your dispatchers and drivers.

[Learn more at samsara.com](https://samsara.com)



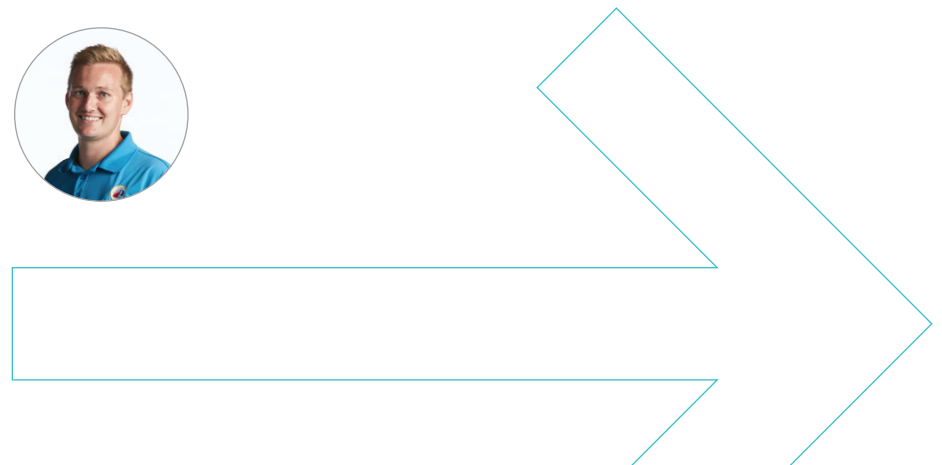
04

Develop a Preventative Maintenance Plan

“If a vehicle is in the shop, it’s not a good thing. Your vehicles should be out on the road working and helping the city.”

DREW NEWSTROM

Automotive & Equipment Engineer



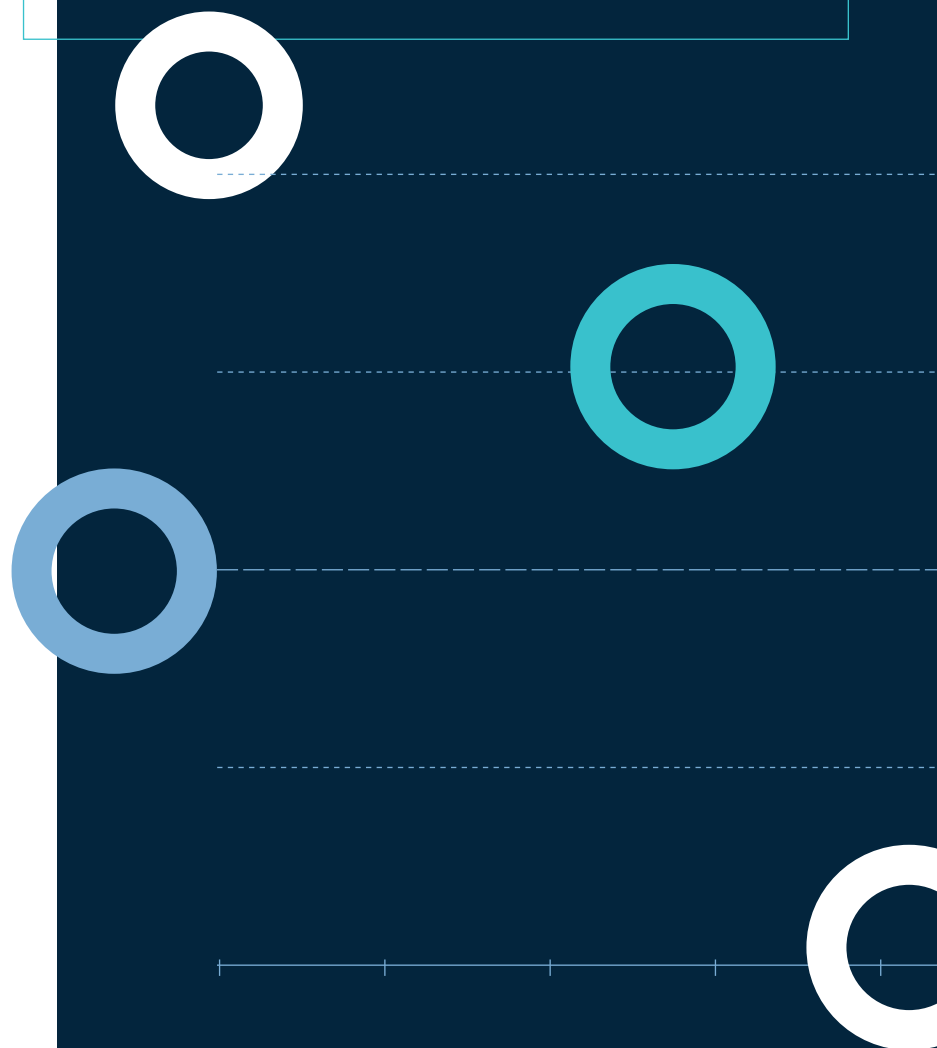
PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE CAN HELP YOUR FLEET REDUCE DOWNTIME AND UNPLANNED VISITS TO THE SHOP, which will allow your city to reduce costs and improve service. But building a robust preventative maintenance program is easier said than done.

Electronic DVIRs, usage-based maintenance schedules, and alerts for engine fault codes are great first steps.

For example, Leonard uses Samsara's diagnostic alerts to pinpoint problems with his vehicles early on. By evaluating and addressing check engine lights and fault codes as soon as they arise, the City of Fort Lauderdale is able to send their vehicles to the shop before more severe damage is done, reducing unnecessary downtime and keeping their vehicles on the road longer.

"With Samsara's fault codes, we can actually prepare ahead of time and have the right mechanic in the shop ready to repair a vehicle by the time it comes in," said Newstrom. "This makes us much more efficient."

Emergency repairs can be 4x more expensive than preventative maintenance.



In addition, with the ability to look at historical engine data, the City of Fort Lauderdale is able to leverage usage-based maintenance to better predict their maintenance needs and plan out checkups in advance. Thanks to their preventative maintenance strategies, the City of Fort Lauderdale was able to reduce vehicle downtime by 28% and reduce the number of vehicles in the shop by 20%.

PRO TIP

Use diagnostic data within the Samsara dashboard to easily communicate with other departments to facilitate a quick repairs process. Drivers can also easily report malfunctions with paperless DVIRs through the Samsara Driver App to streamline pre- and post-trip vehicle inspections and reduce vehicle downtime.

Learn more at samsara.com



WHEN CRAFTING YOUR PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE STRATEGY, MAKE SURE YOUR TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION INCLUDES:

- ☐ Real-time vehicle diagnostics
- ☐ Preventative maintenance scheduling
- ☐ Maintenance alerts
- ☐ Dashboards to track fuel usage and idle time
- ☐ Shareable and editable maintenance logs for your mechanics



05

Improve Fuel Efficiency by Reducing Idle Time

“By giving drivers and supervisors visibility into idling time, we have been able to raise awareness about their specific behaviors and improve fuel efficiency across our fleet.”

DR. NANCY GASSMAN

Assistant Public Works Director, Sustainability



AS A FLEET MANAGER, IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT FUEL COSTS CAN BE A HUGE BURDEN ON YOUR FLEET'S BUDGET. In fact, second to vehicle depreciation, fuel is most fleets' greatest expense. Thankfully, there are ways to address this mounting cost so that your fleet can stay under-budget and environmentally friendly.

The first step? Make sure your fleet has an idling policy in place. Without a policy, drivers are more likely to forget to turn off their engines, which wastes gas and increases fuel spend for your fleet. In fact, just one hour of idling uses an entire gallon of diesel fuel¹⁰, so decreasing your fleet's idle time with a simple policy can help cut costs almost immediately.

The City of Fort Lauderdale, for example, has implemented a 30-second idling policy, after which engines should be turned off. But creating an idling policy is just the first step — in order to hold drivers accountable, it's important to get visibility into actual fuel usage. Using Samsara's dashboard, Gassman is able to track fuel usage and idle times across the entire fleet with just a few simple clicks.

On average, a vehicle will naturally depreciate in value up to 37% within the first five years of ownership. Adding extended idling wear and tear can increase the depreciation significantly.

1 GALLON
of diesel is used each
hour of idling⁷

6 BILLION GALLONS
of fuel used each year by the
trucking industry on idling alone⁸

20 BILLION DOLLARS
spent nationwide on
idling every year⁹

[7. U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy](#)

[8. U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy](#)

[9. U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy](#)

[10. The Real Cost of Trucking – Per Mile Operating Cost of a Commercial Truck, Truckers Report](#)

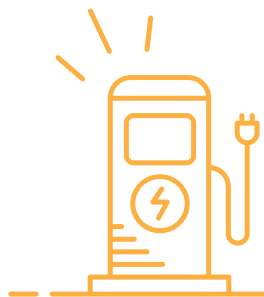
If you're looking to save on fuel costs and increase the sustainability of your fleet, it might be the right time to introduce electric vehicles into your fleet's mix. Since EVs are known for their fuel efficiency and cost-effectiveness, they might be a great addition to your in-city vehicles. In addition to the environmental benefits, adopting EVs could help position your city as a leader in the clean transportation movement. "This year we installed the first EV solar charger in Florida and we have deployed 4 new Nissan Leaf vehicles. By replacing 30 sedans with hybrids, our fuel consumption was reduced by 3.6% from 2017 to 2018," said Gassman.



**AVG. COST OF
A GALLON OF FUEL**

\$4

VS



**AVG. COST PER KWH
IN ELECTRICITY**

\$1.50

Did you know that the average cost to operate an electric vehicle (EV) in the United States is \$485 per year¹¹ compared to the \$1,117/year for a traditional gasoline-powered vehicle?

11. [University of Michigan](#)

PRO TIP

Use Samsara fuel reports to compare fuel usage across vehicles with different fuel types.

[Learn more at samsara.com](https://samsara.com)



06

Get Visibility into on-the-Road Safety

"Before, if we got a call that a city vehicle was speeding or driving recklessly, all we could say was, "We're sorry." We couldn't give them a response. Now I can look to see which vehicle was there, who was driving the vehicle, and make sure it doesn't happen again."

DREW NEWSTROM

Automotive & Equipment Engineer



SAFETY IS TOP OF MIND FOR MOST MUNICIPAL FLEET

MANAGERS — after all, many of the services your fleet provides are specifically intended to keep your city safe for all citizens. But without insight into how your drivers are behaving on the roads, it can be difficult to respond promptly and accurately to citizen complaints and offer constructive feedback to your team.

“One of the things that I watch for every day is where we have exposure to liability,” said City Manager Chris Lagerbloom. “From a safety and compliance perspective, it’s important to know where our cars are and how they’re operating.” That’s why last year, the City of Fort Lauderdale decided to get more visibility into on-the-road safety by installing a robust telematics system. More than 1,000 Samsara Vehicle Gateways give them the real-time GPS location of every vehicle, as well as newfound visibility into a variety of safety metrics — most importantly, speeding.

“Our neighbors often want to know whether a vehicle was speeding recklessly or whether it really was supposed to be speeding, like in the case of an emergency,” said Marla Donald, Senior Management Analyst for the Parks and Recreation Department at the City of Fort Lauderdale.



Now, if they receive a call, they can immediately look up a vehicle's location and speed. Plus, each supervisor gets a weekly report that highlights speeding over a certain limit, and they have formed a safety committee that meets monthly to review every accident alongside speed data.

Leonard said that investing in telematics has been critical for monitoring their drivers' behavior, establishing benchmarks, and tracking coachable events — and they're seeing a big difference when it comes to safety.

"Since we implemented Samsara, we have seen a huge impact on safe driving habits," said Leonard. "Speeding in city vehicles has dramatically dropped."

PRO TIP

Strengthen your driver safety program with data from Samsara's Vehicle Gateways. Use driver behavior information to create effective coaching programs and reinforce safe driving behaviors.

Learn more at samsara.com





07

Empower Stakeholders with Actionable Data

“Weekly, our supervisors get a Samsara fuel report as well as a safety report so they can view the stats for their drivers from that week. This not only gives them clear visibility into the stats that matter to them, but also helps them see where changes need to be made.”

DREW NEWSTROM

Automotive & Equipment Engineer



DATA CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL PIECES of the fleet management puzzle, especially for government fleets. But even after installing a telematics solution, one of the biggest challenges can be figuring out how to parse and analyze your data so that it becomes actionable.

One way the City of Fort Lauderdale navigates this problem is by utilizing Samsara's robust tagging features. With Samsara, Leonard and Newstrom can tag vehicles and equipment by department, division, and more. By getting granular with tagging, they are able to make weekly reports more accessible and actionable for their supervisors.

Newstrom said that weekly report sharing has helped the supervisors catch behaviors and inefficiencies that can be improved with coaching. Fuel usage, idle time, and routing are some of the most popular reports among supervisors because they can be easily addressed and improved.

"Idling is what they're most interested in, but some of them see the reports and say 'Whoa, this person is driving a lot,' and then they dig into it to find out why," said Newstrom.



City liaisons—City of Fort Lauderdale department employees who specialize in cross-departmental communication—also play an important role in communication and information sharing. For Leonard, empowering liaisons with data is critical.

“Since the fleet services program rarely communicates directly with citizens, it’s crucial to build relationships with your city liaisons to ensure that your citizens stay in-the-know about delays or changes in service,” said Leonard.

Start with formalized liaison training on the specifications of your city fleet’s operations, priorities, and information systems — including any telematics platform you have. Establishing this common ground will set both parties up for smarter collaboration, which will ultimately help improve services to your citizens.

PRO TIP

Scheduled reports make it easy to share data (like fuel usage or driver safety) with liaisons, supervisors, and other key stakeholders in your city government. Easily schedule your reports to go out on a daily or weekly basis with Samsara.

Learn more at samsara.com





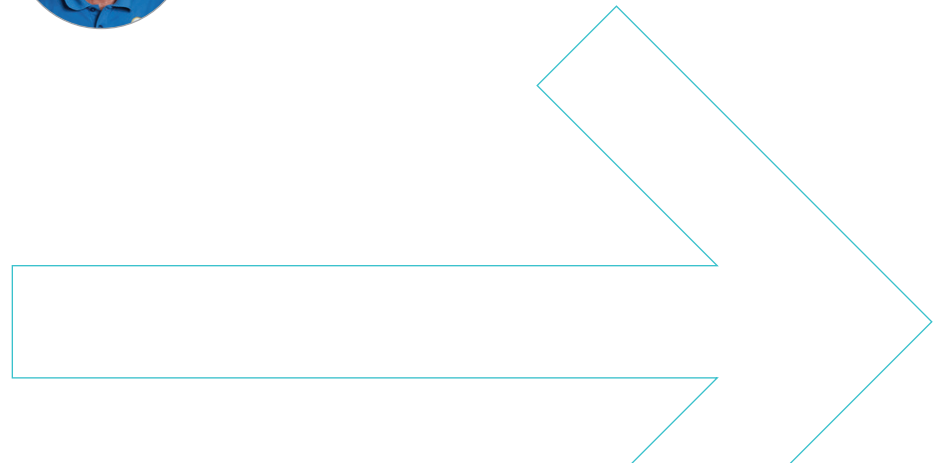
08

Hire and Train the Best Staff

“If you have faith in your staff, so will your citizens.”

SANDY LEONARD

Program Manager, Fleet Services



THIS ONE MIGHT SOUND SIMPLE, but hiring the best people will help your fleet carry out your city's mission to serve the community. Communities are stronger when citizens can rely on their local government, so make sure this is a step you don't overlook.

But hiring quality employees is no easy feat. To staff his department with the best, Leonard aims to align values.

"Focus on finding skill sets that complement your mission," said Leonard. "Ask questions in your interview process that help determine whether the candidate believes in the work of your department."

Hiring people with a passion for public service will strengthen your department and city, but it's important to make sure you also equip your team with the best tools and technology. In fact, according to The Workforce Institute, 48%¹² of employees wish their workplace technology performed as well as their personal technology — so make sure you apply the same high standards from your hiring process to your technology vetting process, too.

Leonard also noted the value of having a strong and capable administrative staff. "Your administrators are key to the success of your department," he said. Emphasizing the importance of their role — especially while hiring — can help improve efficiencies across the board.

¹². [The Workforce Institute](#)



PRO TIP

Use the Samsara Driver App to make your drivers' lives easier on the road. The Samsara Driver App's intuitive interface helps drivers quickly and easily log their hours, receive training, and stay compliant while on the job.

[Learn more at samsara.com](https://www.samsara.com)



09

Celebrate Team Wins and Accomplishments

“Fleet Services, Fort Lauderdale celebrates accomplishments annually with a lunch and our maintenance contractors. First Vehicle Services celebrates safety and metric accomplishments throughout the year.”

DREW NEWSTROM

Automotive & Equipment Engineer



MORALE IS A KEY COMPONENT THAT IMPACTS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION across all industries and professions—and state and local government is no exception.

Employee engagement isn't just an ancillary benefit to your organization—there's a monetary benefit to having happy employees, since it's extremely costly to replace them. According to Forbes, the median cost of employee turnover is 21% of their annual salary, so anything you can do as a fleet manager to keep your employees satisfied is good for your budget.

What's the best way to keep your employees engaged? Celebrate wins and accomplishments at the individual and team level. By publicizing your team's successes, you not only help boost morale, but you also showcase examples of what it takes to be successful to your team.

One way the City of Fort Lauderdale does this is by making banners and taking teams to lunch when the fleet achieves key milestones.

21%

of an employee's salary is what it costs to replace them

CREATIVE WAYS TO SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION

- Monthly or yearly BBQs
- Printed banners for big wins
- Team lunches or pizza parties
- Annual awards

“In the last 3 years, we’ve replaced 1,000 vehicles (59% of our fleet), which was a cause for celebration. We also took our team out to lunch when we achieved our ISO 14001 certification,” said Leonard.

Celebrations can be as simple as throwing a pizza party or creating an employee of the month award. Or, you can take it a step further and create annual awards to give out at the end of each year based on different categories such as safety, efficiency, and customer service.

PRO TIP

Keep your drivers engaged by incentivizing drivers with good behavior. The Samsara Driver App gives drivers insight into their own safety scores and allows them to compare their scores with their peers to create friendly competition across your fleet.

Learn more at samsara.com





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samsara.com/free-trial